United States Department of Agriculture

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News Release

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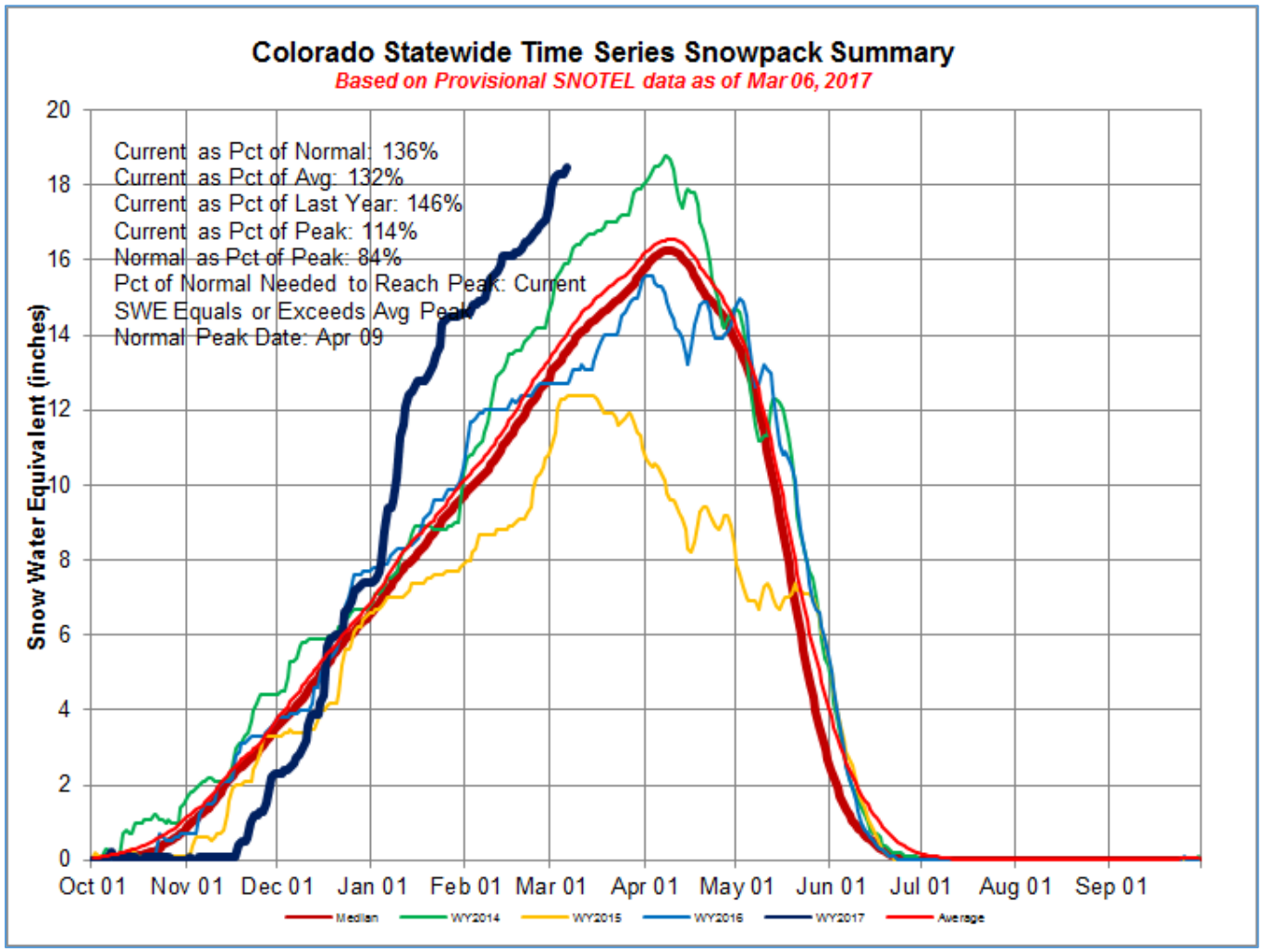
February Returns to Near Normal Precipitation

Denver, CO – March 6th, 2017 – Near normal February precipitation graced Colorado after significant accumulations during December and January. February totals were as low as 88% of normal in mountains of the Arkansas River basin and as high as 119% the South Platte River basin, with the average across the state on par with normal at 100%. "Statewide year to date precipitation now stands at 123% of normal on March 1 while snowpack is a robust 139% of normal" said Brian Domonkos, Colorado Snow Survey Supervisor. He continued, "All but two of the major basins in Colorado have already surpassed average annual peak snowpack." Those two basins are the South Platte and combined Yampa & White basins. Snow accumulations typically continue through early to late April.



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The plentiful snowpack in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains is excellent news for water users in the Rio Grande where snowpack conditions in the previous six years failed to reach normal peak snowpack. Snowpack this year in the Rio Grande surpassed the average annual peak snowpack in mid-February and soared higher with late February storms. While predicted runoff is not as favorable as the present snowpack situation, forecasts point to near to above normal runoff. Reservoirs in the Rio Grande basin, currently at 91% of normal storage, have not breached the normal mark in over seven years, hope to see a boost from the plentiful snowpack.

Statewide reservoir storage is slightly above normal at 107% heading into what streamflow forecasts are indicating will be an above normal runoff year in most watersheds. With nearly all runoff projections pointing toward at or above normal streamflows, many locations will likely see adequate water supplies. Further to the southwest conditions warrant a more watchful eye where runoff projections are currently well above normal in the Gunnison River and Western San Juan mountain watersheds. Despite favorable outlooks sufficient time remains to significantly change predictions from dry, warm and windy weather to cool and rainy or snowy, future weather can still impact runoff even in years of surplus snowpack. Continued monitoring and forecasts are needed to prepare for suitable water management.

Colorado's Snowpack and Reservoir Storage as of March 1, 2017

BASIN	% MEDIAN SNOWPACK	% LAST YR.'S SNOWPACK	% AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE	LAST YEAR'S % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE
GUNNISON	155	155	110	109
COLORADO	135	135	107	110
SOUTH PLATTE	140	138	107	107
NORTH PLATTE	130	142	----	----
YAMPA/WHITE	116	120	127	122
ARKANSAS	143	140	103	124
RIO GRANDE	136	137	91	93
SMDASJ*	149	153	114	104
STATEWIDE	139	140	107	111

*Combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan Basins

For more detailed and the most up to date information about Colorado snowpack and supporting water supply related information, refer to the Colorado Snow Survey website at:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/co/snow/

Or contact Brian Domonkos, Colorado Snow Survey Supervisor at Brian.Domonkos@co.usda.gov or 720-544-2852.